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Thoughts from Nietzsche

BY

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MILWAUKEE.

I. The Superman.

II. The Weakness of Pity.

III. Christianity as a Denial of Life.

Nietzsche is medicine, not food.
A tonic need not taste good to do good.

THREE SUNDAY MORNING ADDRESSES PRINTED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MEMBERS OF THE MILWAUKEE UNITARIAN CHURCH.

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THE SUPERMAN.

There is nothing very interesting about the life of Nietzsche except his writings. Born in Germany in 1844, he believed that his family came from Poleland. Since he had little respect for either German militarism or German culture, he always preferred to be called a Pole. His father was a country clergyman but transmitted to his son none of his own respectful attitude toward religion. Nietzsche, when young, was said to have been "the perfection of a well mannered boy, and never did anything naughty". Perhaps he was saving his strength in order to throw stones later in life at everything with which he disagreed. As a model boy he gained a fellowship which enabled him to spend six years in an exclusive preparatory school where he specialized in languages. At the university he devoted himself to classical studies, and at twenty-four became a professor of philology at Basel, in Switzerland, where he taught for ten years with success. Then he gave up his professorship and devoted himself to critical writing. His mind died in 1889, but his body continued to live until 1900.

An admirer of Nietzsche calls him "a poet-philosopher, a lover of mankind, a prophet of a Christ that is to be". Such terms do not seem accurate. They imply a genial spirit, a sympathy with life, a desire to help all men. These qualities are not prominent in Nietzsche's books. Nietzsche is more like strong medicine than like pleasant food. His teachings provide a tonic for occasional use rather than every-day spiritual nourishment. Like many old-fashioned tonics they often leave a bitter taste in the mouth. There

seems, however, to be this difference; while the old-fashioned tonic had printed on the bottle, "Shake before Taking", in the case of Nietzsche you first take, and then you shake. Sometimes you shake with indignation that such radical thoughts should ever get into print. At other times you shake with fear lest long cherished beliefs should be overthrown.

Take the startling titles of some of Nietzsche's books. "Beyond Good and Evil"; how that shakes the comfortable opinion that ethical questions have all been settled. Take "The Anti-Christ"; how that shakes those orthodox believers who blindly cling to the dogmatic, priestly, ritualistic type of Christianity. Or consider some of his striking sentences. "It is only among decadents that pity is called a virtue"; how this irritates those inefficient persons to whom life is a slush of sentimentalism, and makes them weep more unavailing tears than ever. Or there is his notorious remark about war; " You say, it is a good cause that justifies a war; I say it is a good war that justifies every cause". We can see the professional pacifist grow red in the face, reach angrily for the nearest weapon, and rush into the fight.

Extremely irritating sentences are not what we expect from a "poet-philosopher"; but they are not inappropriate in a strong tonic. If the tonic be of the fraudulent and patent medicine type, then the stimulant is bad and ought to be condemned. But if the tonic be wisely prepared, and the shock contains a due percentage of truth, then a dose may be good for us all, especially when we are suffering from mental or moral indolence.

Now Nietzsche holds that all society is suffering from an attack of this tired feeling. Men are made inefficient by a kind of universal spring-fever, a sort of mental and moral hook-worm disease. The result is the half-hearted type of life Ibsen ridiculed, when in his poem, "Brand", he wrote:

"Try every man in heart and soul,
You'll find he has no virtue whole,
But just a little grain of each.
A little pious in the pew,
A little grave, — his father's way, —
A little free in promise making,
And then, when vows in liquor willed,
Must be in mortal stress fullfilled,
A little fine in promise breaking.
Yet, as I say, all fragments still,
His faults, his merits, fragments all,
Partial in good, partial in ill,
Partial in great things, and in small;—
And here's the grief, that, worse or best,
Each fragment of him wrecks the rest."

In a world of ambition and courage men ought to help one another to rise above the common-place level, but this is the last thing they ever do. As Emerson wrote: "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs". Nietzsche enters into particulars and gives a list of the things that discourage the search for realities. There is Philosophy, of the self-satisfied type. If a man's thought be tired of the contradictions of life, if he be too weary to think his way farther along

the path towards truth, then some so-called final system of philosophy comes along. It tells him that all truth has been discovered and asks him to enroll himself as a blind follower of Plato, or Kant, or Hegel. There is Democracy, as Nietzsche understands, or misunderstands it. If a man be weary trying to reach social perfection, if the struggle for new and higher types of social life be too much for him, democracy bids him rest. It declares that life on "Main Street" is good enough, that the standard of the crowd is sufficient, that the hoarse mutterings of the drab uneducated mass is the voice of God, and that the struggle for the unusual may cease. There is Socialism. If a man tire trying to earn a living, if courage fail him in business competition, if he have not the heart to strive for leadership and efficiency in industry, he is told to average property and wages, to adjust his work to the lowest level, and to slow down the wheels of progress.

There is Morality, that lower form of morality which identifies itself with custom, and is always praising the "good old days". If a man become discouraged about progress and reform, this morality takes advantage of his weakness. It says to him, What is the use of change, stick to the old ways, follow the old crowd and you cannot go wrong. There is Religion, of that enervating type that Nietzsche calls a "crime against life". It teaches that it is impossible for man to be good for much in this evil world. He must look to Heaven for salvation. He need not take the trouble to be heroic, for he can expect some supernatural being to do the work for him, to make up all his deficiences, and to carry his

sins. There is Art, which also may be employed as a narcotic. If a man just feels wrong, he uses a few sweet sounds, or bits of bright colors to hypnotize himself, to call his attention away from stern realities. If we recite an ancient creed in church the spoken words may seem to contradict modern experience and knowledge. But when we hear a great choir sing the creed, the sensuous sound of many voices puts a false authority into the words, and our feelings assent to doctrines which the mind denies. Thus art may be used to draw a curtain between man and truth.

It is this half-hearted kind of world, half-hearted in work and thought and ideals, which meets us in Nietzsche's most celebrated book, "Thus Spake Zarathustra". For ten years Zarathustra, the prophet of the Superman, has lived alone on a mountain. One morning he gets up early and announces to his only neighbor, the sun, that he has accumulated so much wisdom that it rather tires him, a remark characteristic of both the Superman and Nietzsche. So he has determined to go down into the valley and share his overflowing knowledge with men. When he reaches the market place he finds the people gathered together waiting to see two dancers perform on a tight-rope. He seizes the opportunity to make a speech. Like every radical reformer he attacks them for being hopelessly content with their present life. "It is not your sins, it is your self-satisfaction that cries to heaven." You laugh at the apes from which you sprang, but the future man will laugh just as much at you. Man is not a goal, as you think, but something to be surpassed. You ought to recognize that you are a rope stretched between the animal of the past

and the Superman of the future. What have you done to push beyond incomplete man toward the Superman?

The waiting crowd is not much impressed. Zarathustra tries to shame them out of their low satisfaction by describing what will happen if they refuse to move forward. The earth will no longer produce great men. Only the degenerate man will remain, the last of his race, the petty man who lives in a petty way upon a petty earth. He is unable to see anything great in life. He blinks his stupid eyes and asks sleepily, "What is love, or creation, or aspiration, or a star? This degenerate man finds it difficult either to rule or to obey. He can neither select and follow a heroe nor be a heroe himself. It is a world in which there is no shepherd, but only sheep. "Everybody longs for equality; everybody is equal", just because he longs for it. "Whoever doubts this will of his own accord go to the home for the feeble-minded". The crowd is not at all dismayed by this picture of a democratic world without ambition, strong personality, or heroes. The people shout in scorn: "Give us this last of all men, and you can have the Superman all to yourself. The circus performers appear, the dancing on the tight-rope begins, and they turn from the prophet to something of real importance. Zarathustra goes back to his lonely mountain home.

We have here the heart of Nietzsche's teaching. He has an immense contempt for the crowd, for the philosophy, the religion, the democracy, the socialism of the crowd, not so much because it is the crowd, as because it likes to be the crowd. So Nietzsche offers a criticism different from that

which we usually hear. Modern social criticism is generally presented for the purpose of reforming the crowd. We wish men to change and improve the common life. Nietzsche, however, wishes us to break with the crowd, to leave it behind for something better. Just as Ibsen concludes at the end of his play, "An Enemy of Society", that "the strongest man is he who stands most alone", so Nietzsche declares that greatness exists only apart from the market-place and from the praise of men. Because the crowd loves the inaction of peace, Nietzsche praises the life of adventure, of struggle, of the "Will to Power", and even puts in a good word for war. Because the crowd uses the modern democratic state to praise its own common-place self, Nietzsche denounces the state. "Where the state ceases to be, there the first real man begins".

Evolution, to the average man, means simply the struggle for existence, not the struggle for greatness. So the average man thinks it may be possible to remove the struggle and leave only the existence. But Nietzsche does not believe that the life force within man can be satisfied merely to exist, merely to keep itself weakly alive. Evolution means to him a desire for self-expression, a strong, active, "Will to Power". This impulse to power values courage above mere existence. It is an instinct for rank, for an aristocracy of power. It insists that egotism belongs of right to man. "The noble soul has reverence for itself". The tall tree on the mountain side grows at last so high above both animals and men that if it wished to speak, nobody would understand it. When a noble youth, ambitious to create new virtues, meets Zarathustra on the mountain side, and

confesses that he often feels sad and lonely in his search for truth, Zarathustra replies that youth loses all that is best in life if it turns weakly back, and urges him "not to cast away the heroe in his own soul". Because "Thus Spake Zarathustra" sets forth in this uncompromising way the right of the individual to be himself, and defends his will to power, it has been called "The Bible for Distinguished Men".

There is much in Nietzsche's glorification of the Superman that reminds us of Carlyle and his worship of the heroe. But the sense of social responsibility is greater in Carlyle's heroe than in the Superman. There is also much in Nietzsche that recalls Emerson's gospel of self-reliance, the right to be a non-conformist, the duty of keeping ever afloat on the sea of life. But Emerson's self-reliant man is also a social man, able to show more patience and self-control in the presence of the slow moving crowd than the easily irritated Superman. Emerson sets before us both a higher and a more difficult ideal when he writes; "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude". Yet, even after we recognize the defects in Nietzsche's teaching, it continues to keep its irritating grip upon us. For we cannot deny that we are face to face with the real danger that marked individuality, and free personality, and distinguished careers will be choked by the modern crowd.

There is the problem of universal education, with state universities open to all. Is there not always danger lest the lower schools, carrying

more votes, set the standard for the higher, that the universities may go down and cater to the people, instead of the people coming up to the universities? What we gain in extent and quantity of education we may lose in quality. There is the amazing spread of amusements. A workingman in a large city recently expressed his dismay at the changes taking place. "A few years ago", he said, "a man staid at home evenings, and only dressed himself in his best clothes on Sunday. Now he puts on his Sunday clothes every night, goes out on the streets, and wanders aimlessly from one moving picture show to another". Do more theatres also mean better theatres? Or take democracy; are we certain where it is leading us? It is pointed out that we have few great men in public life, few men of strong vigorous character in congress. Is this because there are no strong men left in our democratic world, because the crowd has swallowed them up, or is it because strong men will not submit to the whims of the crowd? Does not a democracy deserve Nietzsche's bitter words in which responsible leadership is unappreciated, in which the politician, playing to the galleries, is preferred to the statesman planning on long lines, in which the demagogue is often eagerly listened to, while the trained, scientific expert goes unheard? Perhaps it is this widespread distrust of leadership that has caused so many American men of marked executive ability to turn to business, where the "Will to Power" has so far been free to exercise control. But now the crowd asks, in the name of socialism, that it be allowed to run both politics and business. Will this mean increased or decreased social wealth? If the slow-

est worker, the man who lays the fewest bricks, or drives the fewest nails, is to be allowed to set the pace for all work in the coming industrial state, then the age of Zarathustra's "last man", with no force of charracter, no energy or ambition, with no power to love or to work in a strong way is upon us, and mankind is ready to retrace its steps toward the apes.

If it were not for these political and industrial questions, Nietzsche's violent attack on modern society might pass unnoticed. But the presence of so many unsolved problems makes it impossible to refute Nietzsche by words alone. The only convincing answer to his pessimism will be actual social progress in the direction of the free, just, and ideal social life. Such progress will require the pioneer, the self-reliant, independent, forward-pushing man; otherwise all men will contendly remain mired in the past. Such progress will also need the man of vision, who from the lonely mountain top spies out the promised land. But it will also require a sense of responsibility for the crowd, a willingness to explain the path of progress in plain and simple language, and a patience to wait for the slow and faint-hearted, such as Nietzsche's Superman does not possess.

If the Superman is he who dares to push ahead of the crowd into a new country, perhaps the Super-Superman will be he who dares turn from solitary visions of truth to become as one who serves his fellow men, who is not only wise enough to point out the difficult problems that confront democracy, but also strong enough to face these problems day after day, and to wrestle mightily with them for the common good.

THE WEAKNESS OF PITY.

In our first address we considered Nietzsche's stimulating message to the individual. The problem he sets before him is, "what type of man must be reared, must be willed, as having the highest value, as being the most worthy of life and the surest guarantee of the future". Evolution means something more than a struggle for mere average existence. It is a "Will to Power", which would push beyond present man. The life force strives to produce the heroe whom Carlyle would have us worship. The energy within calls for the free and self-reliant man, who dares to trust primitive, unreasoned impulse, of whom Emerson wrote:

> "Freedom's secret wilt thou know?
> Counsel not with flesh and blood;
> Loiter not for cloak or food;
> Straight thou feelest, rush to do."

It is evident that a strongly centralized state, or a domineering military caste, or a Prussian attempt to force the same culture upon all the people through control of the schools, does not encourage independent character. So we are not surprised to find that Nietzsche was a most bitter critic of Germany, and that he always preferred French culture and freedom.

We also noticed certain temptations that stand in the way of every man who desires to push forward. Just as in the old Greek poem, The Odyssey, the sirens try to lure Ulysses and his sailors on the rocks, and so put an end to their adventuresome voyage, so certain modern sirens tempt the modern traveller to give up his journey toward the Superman and to cast anchor in the harbor of the common-place. Only while the ancient sirens were generally recognized as designing females, of none too good a reputation, the modern sirens occupy quite respectable positions, and bear honored names. Philosophy and religion, democracy and art, may all at times act the part of false friends. They urge the traveller to be content with truth already found, with average standards of life, with soft doctrines of salvation, and to forget the call to strenuous life.

The most dangerous temptress of all now meets us. She is called Pity, and does more than all the others to make man weak and inefficient. Here, more than elsewhere, Nietzsche justifies his claim that he takes a wholly different view of duty from that held by the mass of men, and turns morality upside down. Pity, which the world regards as a virtue, he calls a vice. Pity, which most men think a sign of spiritual growth, he brands as spiritual decadence. Pity, which religion seems to regard as a duty, he holds is the last and most dangerous sin for man to overcome. For pity makes love unavailing, and as a rule fails to help even those whom it pities. As a flaw in a steel beam weakens its strength, or as a knot in a timber reduces its power to support heavy weights, so pity spoils everything it touches.

Many persons are so shocked at this extreme

view that they will not stop to consider just what it means. They regard Nietzsche as a moral monster, as being himself the chief of all sinners. They decline to take any medicine unless it is sugar coated. But when Nietzsche's statements about the weakness of pity are grouped together and carefully examined they do not seem very shocking, at least to those who have been trained to face radical truth.

Nietzsche does not mean by pity what we usually mean. In English we say that we have pity **for** a person, by which we commonly mean only that we recognize his condition as unfortunate. But Nietzsche uses the word, "Mitleid", which means that we have pity **with** a person, that we suffer with him, and so add our sorrow to his sorrow. Nietzsche makes it clear that he uses pity with this stronger meaning. He defines sympathy as "fellow-suffering". When we thus suffer **with** another person we only add to the general stock of weepiness, and our tears often blind us to our practical duty. So Nietzsche says that; "pity is a waste of feeling, a moral parasite which is injurious to health; it cannot possibly be our duty to increase the evil in the world". He asks whether, if all the woe of the world could be viewed from some height, it should be allowed to arouse so much sympathy in the spectator as to double the amount of the world's woe; and he concludes that this would be an evil. This is not the teaching of a hard-hearted man but of one who had himself felt the depressing effect of pity upon useful action and had himself been obliged to wage a fight against it. Nietzsche's sister says of his experience as a nurse in war time;—"What the sympathetic heart of my brother suffered at

that time cannot be expressed; months after he still heard the groans and the agonized cries of the wounded. During the first year it was practically impossible for him to speak of these things".

Let us see for ourselves how an excess of pity, how suffering with others is likely to weaken power to do good. Here is a boy. He climbs a tree in the back-yard, falls out of it and breaks a leg. Here is a sympathetic mother, who is so overcome with sorrow for her boy that when she looks out of the window and sees him fall she promptly faints away. What use is a fainting mother to a boy with a broken leg? Here is a hospital filled with sickness and pain. Suppose the nurses, instead of living bravely and conscientiously above the level of the hospital pain, should suffer with the patients. Suppose that they should duplicate every groan, shudder with every agony, tremble with every fear of death. Would anybody ever get well in such a dismal and sympathetic hospital? At the operating table stands the surgeon. Suppose he allows his thoughts to concentrate on the suffering of the patient instead of on the way to relieve the patient. What use would a weeping surgeon be to a sick world?

When students at college are asked what kind of religion they like they reply;—"No sob stuff". They instinctively feel that mere weeping is not socially efficient, that it is better to face the world with courage than with tears, that carefully worked out plans for making the world better are of more value than irrational appeals to unrestrained emotion.

The chief reason why Jesus is a greater religious leader than Buddha is that he appealed to

love rather than to pity. When Buddha felt so sorry for the sick man, the old man, the dead man, he met when driving one day in his park, then he concluded that life contained only evil, and he sought in passive meditation a way of escape. When Schopenhauer, the celebrated philosopher of pessimism, made pity the corner stone of his morality, then the woes of life loomed so vast and threatening that he also lost courage and the desire to live. That is the reason why Nietzsche writes;—"Alas for love which does not pass beyond pity". That is why he puts love above pity, because love does not despair, but has a creative power which would help and make over those whom it loves. That is why he says; "Not your pity, but your bravery has hitherto saved the unhappy".

So far we may in general agree with Nietzsche that pity with a person, feeling his suffering as keenly as he feels it himself, tends to lessen, or even to destroy our power to help that person. To put love above pity, courage above tears, and to control weepiness for the sake of efficiency, is not a vice but a virtue. Now we come to a phase of the subject that is more difficult. We pass from the question of helpfulness to the individual to the larger question of helpfulness to society. We may agree that we ought not allow pity to weaken our ability to aid the suffering individual; but how about suffering society? Do we also agree that we ought not to allow pity to interfere when for the sake of society we need, not simply to aid, but sternly to control and discipline the individual?

An illustration from the higher education may make the matter clear. Such an institution as a

state university, which stands so close to the people, is constantly forced to choose between discipline and pity. Anxious parents and guardians are all the time coming up to the universities to intercede for students who fall below the standards, and are about to be invited to move to a milder intellectual climate. Such parents do not appeal to justice, to the fair-mindedness of the professors. They try to make the governing authorities feel the parental woes so keenly that they shall forget, just this once, to enforce educational standards, forget what a university is for, confuse it with a hospital for the feeble minded or the morally weak. Of course, somewhere in our educational system, the right kind of training ought to be provided for those who cannot advance far along the intellectual road; but the university is not the place for this. The university exists more for the strong than for the weak. It is not a first aid to the mentally wounded, but a training camp for the development of intellectual strength. Its chief business is, or ought to be, with an intellectual aristocracy, not with the common-place average mental life. To give more attention to the weak than to the strong, to spend more time on those who fail in examinations than on those who succeed, would take away all power, all leadership, almost all social usefulness from a university. A standard based on pity instead of on discipline, based on softness instead of on stimulating hardness, would be a vice instead of a virtue. As far as our higher educational institutions go we deny that men are created intellectually equal, and we deny that they have equal intellectual rights.

The illustration of the university is used be-

cause it brings us to the point where we either part company with Nietzsche or continue to profit by his stimulating tho often violent thoughts. Dare we say the same thing of that larger social unit, the social world, that we say of the smaller social unit, the college? Is the social world primarily for the weak or for the strong? It is to be organized chiefly as a hospital for the sick, or as a training ground for the healthy minded? Ought unequal men be given equal freedom, rights, power, or should the lines be more sharply drawn? Is pity the virtue most needed today in our disorganized world, or is stern, disciplined, social efficiency most needed?

Nietzsche holds that the world is primarily for the strong, that evolution is a "Will to Power", not a struggle just to keep aimlessly alive. "The first principle of our humanity is that the weak and botched shall perish". This is strong language, but it does not mean the brutal slaughter of the unfit. It does not require, as some carelessly suppose, that strong individuals should cut the throats of the weak, or that the strong state should lock up in prison all who disagree with it, or that a strong religion should return to the early practice of burning heretics at the stake. Nietzsche refuses to say that a world in which all the influence of the weak was lacking would be a desirable world. Illness seems to him a valuable discipline, which gives time to think, and to rearrange one's plan of life. "Never have I rejoiced more over my condition than during the sickest and most painful moments of my life". But he does hold that, as society is now organized, we give too much encouragement to weakness and too little to strength. He does deny that con-

stitutional weakness has any right to propagate itself. He woul not choke off weak individuals; but he would choke off the permanently weak types.

Nietzsche, therefore, makes a strong plea for eugenics. It is not true that men are created physically, mentally, morally equal, as the cheap politician assures the crowd on the Fourth of July. Modern study of cases of degeneracy shows this. It is not true that men have equal social rights. No man has the right to freedom when he is suffering from typhoid, scarlet-fever, or small-pox. So no man has a right to propagate a degenerate or a criminal type. "Society, as the trustee of life, is responsible for every botched life before it ever comes into existence, and, as it has to atone for such lives, it ought consequently to make it impossible for them ever to see the light of day". "There are cases where to have a child would be a crime, for example, in the case of chronic invalids, and extreme neurasthenics". Nietzsche's views are in agreement with the Wisconsin law when he insists upon "a medical certificate as a condition of any marriage". Real marriage, he believes, "is the desire of two to create that which is more than themselves". So he would ask the young man who would marry, "are you a man who dares to have a child?"

Here we too often let weak sentiment and pity take the place of justice to society. We read in the Old Testament; "I, the Lord, thy God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and fourth generation". We think this could only be true in primitive and hard-hearted days. We are so sorry for the weak, the degenerate, the criminal, that

we allow them to breed freely, allow them to pass their weakness on to the third and to the fourth generation. With our alms-houses, and infant asylums, and short-term reformatories, we make it easier for weak-minded women to go on producing weak-minded children year after year. We are just beginning to make it easier for strong women to produce and bring up strong children in a strong way. In the face of such conditions how can we be content to denounce Nietzsche's teaching as being simply monstrous, how can we rightly decline to take a dose of the bitter medicine we so much need?

In the case of the individual we may agree with Nietzsche;—"Not your pity but your bravery has hitherto saved the unhappy". We should lay aside that sympathy Emerson calls "base", and of which he writes;—"We come to them who weep foolishly, and sit down and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough electric shocks". We need to weep less over men and help them more.

"Alas for the love that does not pass beyond pity". For pity always has a tendency to pessimism, and so a tendency to weakness, inaction, inefficiency. Love always has a tendency to optimism; it believes in and works for the good in the object of its affection. We ought to pay less attention to the pity of Buddha and more attention to the love that was in Jesus. We ought to pity a man less for his many failures, and love him more for his undeveloped good.

In the case of society, we should not allow suffering with others, weak pity for their condition, to stand in the way of our applying stern discipline and strict justice when the welfare of so-

ciety clearly demands it. We ought to insist that degenerate men and women should not be allowed to propagate their kind. We ought to insist that degenerate books, and pictures, and amusements, should not be allowed to propagate their kind. We ought to insist that degenerate ideas of labor, three soft hours of work a day and a large income for every lazy person, should not be allowed to undermine society. We ought to insist that weak standards of discipline in the home and in the schools should be driven out. We ought to insist that religion should be something more than a mush of sentiment, a soft salvation for soft sins, that it should encourage and build up strong and positive types of life.

If we wish to help the world out of its present trouble we should turn from pessimism to optimism, from softness to strength. We should cease to pity others so much, and to pity ourselves so much, that at last it seems a pity that any one of us is still alive. "Man has been only an attempt. There are a thousand paths which have never been trodden". We should brace up, acquit ourselves like men, bring discipline and courage again into life, and alone or together, push on into new paths, which lead at first to strong individual character, and may lead at last to the strong heroic state.

CHRISTIANITY AS A DENIAL OF LIFE.

There is a kind of revolt against conventional customs and ideas that always runs into license. In art it stands for cubist splashes of color without troubling itself about correct drawing. In music it produces a riot of sounds apart from disciplined form. In social life it shows itself as pleasure divorced from restraint, as sex uncontrolled by social responsibility. Whatever may be the faults of Nietzsche he does not preach such a gospel of soft relaxation. "Life gets harder toward the summit, the cold increases, responsibility increases". For the individual, responsibility is the choice man is called upon to make between the standards of the crowd and the vision of the Superman, between soft indolent conformity and the heroic in his own soul. For society this responsibility means organization for the strong more than for the weak, for the healthy more than for the sick, for the good of future men and women more than for the selfish desires of the present.

We can only understand Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity when we keep in mind the fact that he approaches Christianity from the point of view of this conflict of two ideals. On the one hand we have the ideal of higher types of men, of the Superman; on the other hand we have the levelling down tendency of democracy. On the one side we have the belief that society should

organize to perpetuate strong social types; and on the other side we have the demagogue shouting, as in Ibsen's play, that one man is as good as another, that a common barn-yard fowl is just as good as the most cultivated Spanish hen, that the lowest mongrel is the equal of the best bred dog.

Where does the Christianity of dogma, of theology, of formal religion stand? Is it for the crowd or for the Superman? Does it say "Yea" or does it say "Nay" to the strong evolutionary impulse to higher, purer, better bred types of life? Must we describe the usual church in Lowell's words as "a hospital for superannuate forms and mumping shams", as "a parlor where men issue policies of life-assurance on the Eternal Mind", as "but an ambulance to fetch life's wounded and malingerers in, scorned by the strong"; or is it an aid, an inspiration to strong men, and to a strongly builded future social state? No doubt the churches contain both the denial of life and the assertion of life in their differing dogmas; but on which side has been and now is the ecclesiastical emphasis?

Before we quote some of Nietzsche's words about dogmatic Christianity, it is important to note that Nietzsche, like most modern investigators, draws a sharp line between the Christian religion and its founder. Probably the line is too sharply drawn. "The Christians", he writes, "have never led the life which Jesus commanded them to live". That close corporation, the church, "is precisely that which the messenger of glad tidings regarded as beneath him, as behind him". To be really Christian" would mean absolute indifference to dogmas, priests, church, and theology".

We remember that Jesus did seem to reject church rules about fasting, ceremonial washings, long prayers, rigid Sabbath observance, and sharply condemned the hard, formal religion of the Pharisees. We agree with Nietzsche that the original gospel was "a method of life, not a system of belief". Whether desirable today or not, Nietzsche thinks this original gospel would at least be possible. "He who says, 'I refuse to be a soldier, I care not for tribunals, I lay no claim to the services of the police, I will do nothing that disturbs the peace within me, and, if I must suffer on that account, nothing can so well maintain my inward peace as suffering', such a man would be a Christian". Nietzsche pays his tribute to Jesus for his power to live this independent life, above the crowd, above resentment for their stupidity, above fear of death. In this inner "blessedness" he finds the reality of the original gospel. He writes of the crucifixion;—"When the criminal", the thief crucified along with Jesus, "declares;—'The way this Jesus suffers and dies. without murmer of revolt or enmity, graciously and resignedly, is the only right way', he assents to the gospel; and by this very fact is in Paradise".

Whatever measure of approval Nietzsche may give to Jesus for his independent life above resentment and fear, such approval does not extend to the narrow religion afterward built around his name. Nietzsche insists that there "never was more than one Christian, and he died on the cross"; also his "gospel died on the cross". The "glad tidings" of Jesus were closely followed by the "worse tidings" of the Apostle Paul. In him theology replaced the original gospel, and the

priest "again aspired to power". With the extension of Christianity over ever larger and ruder mases of men it began to play to the gallery, to appeal to the mob, to become vulgar and common-place. The dogmatic and priestly type of religion which was at last built up, Nietzsche regards as a "capital crime against life".

Church Christianity stands for "the profanation of the divine nature of man, instead of its accentuation". It could not endure "the evangelical right and truth of every man to be the child of God, which Jesus taught." So it "lowered the concept, man; its ultimate conclusion is that all goodness, greatness, and truth are superhuman, and are obtainable by the grace of God". Then, just as some huge corporation today tries to corner the coal, or grain, or oil market, the one true church, as it calls itself, tries to corner this "grace of God". To get saving truth man has to apply to Protestant synod or to Roman pope. To get saving goodness he has to rely on church baptism, or priestly absolution, or the magic of the mass. To get into heaven he has to be approved and tagged by some church. Original sin and repentance through the church are dogmas formulated to fasten on man the rule of the priest.

Because this theology distrusts life, it also distrusts those brave and unusual men who would reform, educate, advance present life. History shows how official religion "has despatched all great men to hell", all strong reformers, independent thinkers, discoverers of new truth. Instead of standing for progress within this world, it believes only in progress to another world. It is thus a "taming process", which makes men more fit to live in a cage under the control of a

priestly keeper, than to live out in the rough and tumble of real life. Christian pessimism and alcohol Nietzsche regards as "the two great means of corruption", as the two powerful narcotics that slow down man and decrease social efficiency. "We no longer admire those dentists who extract teeth simply in order that they may not ache again". So he refuses longer to admire any ethical or religious teaching that merely desires to uproot life, or any part of life, its strong passions, its forward pushing instincts, its will to power, simply because it does not know what to do with life when it aches, does not know how to impose "some sort of moderation" upon its passions, and so use them to build up resourcefulness, efficiency, and strength.

Nietzsche in his violent way says many extreme things about the ecclesiastical forms of Christianity; but he also says much that is true. We may see how the church has tried to limit life, rather than to encourage life, if we restate the matter in our own words.

Suppose we get up a slogan for all those who wish to make the best out of present life. Here it is;—"Believe in Life and Be Boosters". This means that truth within this present world is worth seeking. Character within this present life is worth building. It is good to study in the hard school of experience and to learn all we can to the very end. It is good to get into the game and play it for all we are worth. Do such statements seem to contain wrong and vicious ideals? The question seems absurd. But, let us go a step farther, let us ask which one of these active, positive, life-encouraging ideals, theological and church Christianity has ever heartily approved? Which

one of them gets enthusiastic and whole-hearted approval of Roman pope, of Protestant council, of early Christian theologians, or even of the writers of the New Testament epistles?

Let us, with Nietzsche, avoid speculative questions about how far the stock Christian dogmas are historically or philosophically true. That is, let us pass over theories about Adam and original sin, about atonement through the blood of the lamb, about a supernatural heaven and hell. Let us ask the modern practical pragmatic question; —How far are the old, stock dogmas of the churches morally or socially useful?

Here is a man who is making a brave fight for self-control. He wishes to live near the summit, where life gets harder, and personal responsibility increases. Will it help to tell him, in the name of the one true church, that in Adam all men have sinned, and that it is hopeless for natural man to try and live a life pleasing to the good? Here is a man who feels that all parts of life are of worth, have some eternal meaning hidden in them. He wishes to feel "eternal life" within himself, to feel "the kingdom" within himself, to feel "blessedness" within himself. He would try to reach in himself the freedom and peace of the pure original gospel of Jesus. Does human life seem of more worth to him when some priest teaches that the only way to reach blessedness and God is to leave the world, kneel before the altar, and eat the real body and the real blood of a sacrificed deity in the magic ritual of the mass? Here is a man who takes his own life very seriously, and feels responsible for his own acts. Does it deepen his character to teach him that Christ, by his death on the cross, bears his sins for him, and that he

should throw all responsibility upon a supernatural saviour? Ibsen in his bitter couplet expressed the true man's opinion of the weakening effect of such a theology upon morality.

> "One man died for you of yore,
> Cowardice is crime no more."

Here are a young man and woman united in a bond of matrimony which to them is pure and holy. Is their belief in the sacredness of matrimony strengthened when they take their first child to be baptized and hear the clergyman declare that the child is "conceived in sin", and can only be made "regenerate" by the magic sprinkling of baptismal water? How can self-respecting parents permit a clegyman thus to insult them? Or is married life made more sacred when the churches continue even today to teach that when God wished to visit the earth he had to be born of a pure virgin in order to escape the aweful contamination of sex?

Here is the modern scientist seeking eternal laws in nature, feeling after the beauty and wonder of life in laboratory and field. The way such scientist has been treated in the past is plain to anybody who reads the two interesting volumes on "The Warfare of Science and Theology" by Andrew D. White. There has been scarcely any important discovery in geology, in astronomy, in biology, in medicine, that has not been bitterly opposed by that kind of organized religion that ties itself down to a fixed creed. Science is more appreciated today; but have the great ethical ideals of modern science ever been incorporated into the official teachings of the usual type of church? Prof. Quick gives these ideals as, "cu-

riosity, candour, care". Prof. James gives them as, "precision, honesty, fact". How many old church dogmas would be left unchanged if such ethical ideals were honestly applied to them?

Here are thousands of earnest men and women who give up their lives to the great cause of social work and social progress. They dream of establishing on this earth an ideal Commonwealth of Man which shall reflect the old religious ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven. Who can believe that such work would not be heartily approved by the great founder of the gospel religion? But who can say that such work has ever received adequate official approval by those who came after him? Can social reform work be encouraged by quoting the later New Testament writers;—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him". Or is social work dignified when a leading denomination today declares that Church Unity should mean the acceptance by all of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, which creeds contain not a single word about love to man, or social duty, or the need of making this present life better?

It is an encouraging sign that at last some of the churches are working to broaden their ethical ideals to include present social duties, and are trying to make religion more socially efficient. Yet it is still true of the vast majority of the churches that they say "Nay" rather than "Yea" to life. Any one of us could bring together from the highest ideals of science, as the modern seeker after truth, and from the highest ideals of social service work, as the modern seeker after righteousness, a more useful and more efficient code of social

ethics than could be gathered from all the orthodox creeds formulated by Christian theologians since the Christian world began?

It is a furious attack that Nietzsche makes on formal, dogmatic, church Christianity; and fury over-reaches itself. Nietzsche is another painful example of what a narrow and orthodox church training during childhood may later do to a man's faith. It often violently drives a man from one extreme to another. Nietzsche, in his reaction from dogmatic Christianity, is like a man who says, because there are many wrong things about the law, therefore all law is wrong. Or he is like a man who says, because much time is wasted in our schools, therefore all schools are a waste of time. But while Nietzsche's teaching may be easily attacked at many points, chiefly in that it overlooks the good and speaks only of the defects of the church religion, it is better to learn what we can from him, instead of merely wasting our time by getting angry. If the tonic can do us any good, it is foolish to complain that it has a bitter and unchristian taste.

The work which the tonic may do for us, the kind of mental and moral strength it may give, seems fairly clear. Both Democracy and Religion tend to become one-sided, and need to be taught to stand straight. If, on the one hand, Democracy needs to rise above the common-place, and "hitch its wagon to a star"; Religion, on the other hand, needs to spend less time in star gazing, and more time in encouraging practical social work. If Democracy needs to think less of its common-place, average self, and more of the Superman that is to be; Religion needs to think less of the Supernatural and more

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of every-day life and duty. Where Democracy needs to be exalted, to push its ideals above the crowd level; Religion needs to pay less attention to a far-away theological heaven, and to learn to be of more service to man here and now.

In conclusion we may quote one of Nietzsche's better and more attractive sentences. "From people who merely pray we must become people who bless". Perhaps a world in which it is possible for people to bless, may turn out to be a blessed world. Perhaps a life, in which all ought to believe, to which all ought to say "Yea", may turn out to be a blessed life. Perhaps a church, which would put aside the desire for dominion and power, and live only to serve and to bless men, would be a blessed church. Perhaps the Superman, who lives above the standards of the crowd, lives above resentment with those who differ from him, lives above fear of death, may not live alone at all, but may live with some Reality deeper and more lasting and more trustworthy than the shifting crowd, the Foundation of all progressive thought and acts, the Source of the will to power, and the Promise to man of ultimate success.

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